Postal Regulatory Commission
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DELIVERING A POSITIVE · CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE ·

Complaint Handling Guidelines

Residential and Small Business Customers

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE ®

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DESCRIPTION

Postal Service employees are to provide timely, customer-friendly, and professional resolution to customer complaints. Prompt response and resolution of customer complaints will increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

This document serves as guidelines and establishes standard guidelines for responding to customer complaints, in addition to establishing procedures for:

- Handling
- Tracking
- Assigning accountability for customer contact
- Timely response and resolution

A complaint is defined as a statement of dissatisfaction with a service, product, policy or personnel. Although, these guidelines are for complaint handling, it should be noted that an inquiry will be defined as a request for information about a service, product, policy, or personnel and should be addressed at initial contact.

ORIGINATING COMPLAINT SOURCES

The Postal Service receives complaints from business and residential customers through the following sources:

- Walk-in (person-to-person)
- Telephone Contact
- Our Web site, www.usps.com
- Calls to our toll-free number 800-ASK-USPS (800-275-8777)
- Written correspondence
- Congressionals
- Headquarters Referrals
- Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC)
- Postmaster General Inquiries
- Office of Inspector General Inquiries (OIG)

Roles and Responsibilities

CUSTOMER CARE CENTERS

- Intake customer issues from 1-800-ASK-USPS
- Educate customers on Postal products and services
- Assist customers with service requests
- Assign correct service issue type and category in the eCC application
- Document customer issues in the eCC application
- Escalation of customers to the District Consumer and Industry Contact Office by providing a phone number

LOCAL POST OFFICE

- Assign responsibility for checking eCC three times a day
- Customer contacted within 24 hours and issue acknowledged
- Research Case
- Accountable for resolution
- Monitor and provide follow-up on closed cases to ensure quality closure and timely handling of customer issues

Guidelines - Complaint Handling Process

District Complaints & inquiry clerks

- Intake of customer issues via phone and eCC
- Research and resolve case
- Provide assistance to Local Post Office personnel on customer issues
- Follow escalation process for complaints/issues that do not meet customer satisfaction
- Oversee District compliance with the complaint handling process including the PRC, PMG, OIG, Congressional, and the Political Campaign Mail complaints

District Consumer & Industry Contact Manager

Initial Point of Escalation

- Research case and resolution including referrals from Headquarters
- Provide assistance on escalated cases from Local Post Office and Care Center
- Provide guidance/instruction to Local Post Office to assist in quality closure and timely handling of customer issues
- Report complaint, initial contact and on-time resolution trends to district leadership
- Monitor and review closed cases to ensure quality closure and timely handling of customer cases.
- Oversee District compliance with the complaint handling process including the PRC, PMG, OIG, Congressional, and the Political Campaign Mail complaints
- Work with Manager, Business Mail Entry to research and resolve Political Campaign Mail complaints
- Follow-up on overdue cases

District Marketing Manager

Second Point of Escalation

- Provide assistance on escalated cases from Consumer and Industry Contact Manager
- Oversee and ensure compliance with the complaint handling process including the Political Campaign Mail complaints
- Monitor for compliance

District Manager

Third Point of Escalation - Within the district

- Research case and resolution of referrals from Headquarters
- Ensure compliance with complaint handling process
- Ensure District strictly follows complaint handling process to include follow-up reviews of closed cases

Area

Fourth Point of Escalation – outside the district

- Research case and resolution of referrals from Headquarters
- Responsible for final resolution
- Monitor Area/District compliance with the Complaint Handling Process
- Monitor Area/District compliance with Political Campaign Mail complaints

Headquarters

Final Point of Escalation - outside of area

- Research case and resolution for complaints requiring interpretation of or impacting national policy
- Monitor national compliance with the Complaint Handling Process
- Provide national policy and procedures for the Consumer and Industry Contact function
- Provide SOPs and procedural instructions
- Carbon copy (cc) Area Consumer and Industry Contact Manager in correspondence from HQ

COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESSES

PROCESSING A WALK-IN (PERSON-TO-PERSON) COMPLAINT

When a customer walks into a local Post Office with a complaint, the Postal Service employee should do the following:

- Listen and apologize on behalf of the US Postal Service
- Thank the customer for taking the time to report their concern
- Record customer complaints on the Customer Complaint Control Log Exhibit 165.3 from the Postal Operations Manual (*reference appendix item #8*) or in appropriate system if applicable to ensure timely response and analyze complaints routinely. Include the following information regarding customer complaints:
  - Customer name
  - Company name, if applicable
  - Customer address
  - Customer telephone number
  - Source of complaint
  - eCC case number or tracking number if applicable
  - Type of contact
  - Type of final response (e.g., personal, telephone, email, and letter)
  - Date received
  - Suspense date
  - Assignment of responsibility for suspense and resolution of the complaint
  - Document specific actions taken to resolve case on Customer Complaint Control Log or appropriate system if applicable
- Research and communicate the resolution to the customer within 3 business days
- If the customer is not satisfied with the resolution, follow the escalation process for resolution

PROCESSING A TELEPHONE COMPLAINT

Follow these instructions when processing a telephone complaint:

- Answer promptly, within three rings and with courtesy
- Thank the customer for calling the United States Postal Service
- Identify your office name and your name
- Listen and apologize on behalf of the United States Postal Service
- If unable to resolve during initial contact, document on Customer Complaint Control Log Exhibit 165.3 from the Postal Operations Manual (reference appendix item #8) or enter in the appropriate system if applicable to ensure timely response and analyze complaints routinely. Include the following information regarding customer complaints:
  - Customer name
  - Company name, if applicable
  - Customer address
  - Customer telephone number
  - Source of complaint
  - eCC case number or tracking number if applicable
  - Type of contact
  - Type of final response (e.g., personal, telephone, email, or letter)
  - Date received
  - Suspense date
  - Assignment of responsibility for suspense and resolution of the complaint
  - Document specific actions taken to resolve case on Customer Complaint Control Log or appropriate system if applicable
- Establish a time you will contact them again and follow-up with the accurate information
  - Assume ownership of YOUR Customer - Do NOT Transfer Calls if possible.
- Resolution within 3 business days
- Thank the customer for using the United States Postal Service

PROCESSING A WRITTEN COMPLAINT

- Contact the customer to acknowledge receipt of complaint using method identified in correspondence (e.g., telephone, email, letter, or postcard)
- Review the written correspondence from the customer concerns; investigate and prepare written response within the Service Level Agreement (reference appendix item #7)
- Responses should be in professional format and address all the customer's issues and include the responder's name, title and contact information (See Correspondence Template)
- Resolution within 3 business days
- Document on Customer Complaint Control Log Exhibit 165.3 from the Postal Operations Manual (reference appendix item #8) or enter in the appropriate system if applicable to ensure timely response and analyze complaints routinely. Include the following information regarding customer complaints:
    - Customer name
    - Company name, if applicable
    - Customer address
    - Customer telephone number
    - Source of complaint
    - eCC case number or tracking number if applicable
    - Type of contact
    - Type of acknowledgement (e.g., personal, telephone, email, letter, or postcard)
    - Type of final response (e.g., personal, telephone, email, or letter)
    - Date received
    - Suspense date
    - Assignment of responsibility for suspense and resolution of the complaint within 3 business days
    - Document specific actions taken to resolve case on Customer Complaint Control Log or appropriate system if applicable
    - If case is created in eCC, scan the customer correspondence and attach to the eCC case
    - If documenting on Control Log, complete the log and file the customer correspondence for 1 year in accordance with record retention policy

PROCESSING USPS.COM AND 800-ASK-USPS COMPLAINT VIA ECC (ENTERPRISE CUSTOMER CARE)

When responding to customer complaints assigned from USPS.com or the 800-ASK-USPS, follow these instructions when processing the request:

- Customer contacted within 24 hours of receipt, issue acknowledged, and resolved if possible
- If unable to resolve during initial contact, document follow-up with customer and resolve by the Service Level Agreement (reference appendix item #7)
- Customer contact is vital to customer satisfaction - adhere to the customer's contact preference indicated in the case
- Email responses should address the customer's issue; be in a professional letter format; and include the responder's name, title, and office name
- Telephone contact should be entered in the Case Notes or Resolution Notes including the name of the person you spoke with and actions taken for resolution
- After 3 phone attempts, if contact is not made, document all contact attempts in the Case Note
- Send the customer a customer contact letter or email, attach a copy to the case and close the case
- Provide adequate and accurate comments about actions taken to resolve the customer complaint/issue in the Resolution Notes

PROCESSING COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FROM CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

Letters and complaints regarding local issues received from Congressional offices are referred to the District Consumer & Industry Contact Manager with a copy to the District Manager and the District Marketing Manager. Enter all Congressionals into eCC and attach applicable documentation.

The District Manager will require a response based on local operating procedures for the completion of Congressional complaints within each district depending on the issue reported, investigation required and response needed.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGN MAIL COMPLAINTS

Political Campaign Mail complaints will be documented by the local Consumer & Industry Contact Office with information and documentation provided by the Political Mail Coordinator, Business Service Network Specialist, Bulk Mail Entry representatives and local Post Office officials (supervisors, managers, and postmasters). Every effort should be made to respond to and resolve Political Campaign Mail complaints in a shorter time-frame (within 12 hours) than the normal 24 – 48 hour response and resolution timeframes. See the Political Mail SOP at:
http://blue.usps.gov/caweb/fsi/documents/2012-Political-Mail-Complaint-Handling-SOP-Final.doc

PROCESSING HEADQUARTER REFERRALS

Headquarter Referrals (Postmaster General/CEO, VP/Consumer and Industry Affairs)

Consumer and Industry Affairs reviews correspondence to determine if it is a policy or service related issue. Policy issues remain at Headquarters Consumer & Industry Affairs for processing. Service related issues are referred to the Field management officials for investigation and response to the customer based on the nature of the issue as inidicated below.

Consumer and Industry Contact Manager Referrals Received from Headquarters Consumer Advocate and Customer Relations

- Letters and complaints regarding local issues, received by the office of the Postmaster General, or other officers at USPS HQ, will be routed via email to the District C&IC Manager for investigation and resolution as field referrals, with scanned copies of the customer's correspondence attached.

- Enter all Headquarters referrals into eCC and attach applicable documentation

- Field referrals require a written response to the customer and the signed response must be attached to the case in eCC when closed.

- Responses should include a reference that the issue was referred to you for investigation and response. For example: "Your letter to Postmaster General (insert current PMG name) regarding [insert issue & date] was referred to this office for investigation and response."

District Manager Referrals Received from Headquarters Consumer Advocate and Customer Relations

- Letters and complaints regarding local issues, received from the Postal Regulatory Commission, Postmaster General's office, Office of the Inspector General, Sr. VP's office, and Consumer Advocate and Manager Customer Relations office may be referred to the District Manager with a copy to the C&ICM and the District Marketing Manager.

- District Manager referrals require a response to the customer by personnel designated by the District Manager.

- Responses should include a reference that the issue was referred to the District Manager for investigation and response. For example: “Your [email or letter] to [the Postal Regulatory Commission, Postmaster General, or Consumer Advocate] regarding [insert issue] was referred to this office for investigation and response.”

- C&IC Managers are responsible for ensuring a case is created in eCC, attaching response to the case when closed, and providing a copy of the response to the Headquarters Response Team. If the response is in hardcopy format, the District Manager, or designee, must sign the response, send an electronic signed and dated copy to Headquarters Response Team, and attach a copy to the eCC case.

PROCESSING COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FROM THE POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION (PRC)

Consumer and Industry Affairs reviews customer complaints received from PRC sources at Headquarters.

- Complaints are recorded on PRC log
  - Requests for information (telephone numbers, contacts, forms, etc.) are not logged
- Acknowledgment of receipt of inquiry is sent to customer if response will require further research
- Complaints are reviewed, investigated and a response is compiled within 10 business days
- Responses provided by:
  - Headquarters
  - District Manager
  - District Consumer & Industry Contact Manager
- Final response is logged and the complaint is closed - copy of response is sent to PRC upon request
- Prior month’s complaints received are forwarded to PRC within the first week of the month with a copy of the written responses

PROCESSING COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FROM THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL (OIG) HOTLINE

Complaints received by the Office of the Inspector General regarding local service issues are referred directly to C&IC offices for response. C&ICs have 10 days to complete the request from the OIG hotline email. The process is as follows:

- Investigate customer issue received via OIG Hotline; determine resolution and response
- Prepare and send response to the customer via their preferred method of contact (if known); email, telephone, or letter:
  - If response is by email, copy the OIG to the email address hotlineresponses@uspsoig.gov
  - If response is by telephone, send an email to the Hotline address to share resolution and response to customer
  - If response is by letter, send an email to the Hotline address to share resolution and attach a scanned copy of the customer response letter
- Responses should include a reference that the issue was referred to you for investigation and response. For example: “Your complaint to the Office of the Inspector General regarding [insert issue] was referred to this office for investigation and response.”
- Emails to the OIG are to include the customer's last name, OIG Case #, and ZIP Code in the email subject line when submitting the resolution to the OIG.

Complaint Escalation Process

Escalation of a case should occur only if the initial point of contact cannot achieve resolution to the customer's satisfaction. The following outlines the escalation process for a customer complaint:

1. Consumer & Industry Contact Office
    a. The C&IC office receives and handles customer complaints that have not been resolved by the local Post Office after two complaints are reported on the same issue, when the customer doesn't receive a callback, as requested, or anytime the customer feels the local Post Office cannot handle their problem.
    b. If the C&IC office receives customer complaints which they cannot resolve, the escalation process is as follows:
2. District Marketing Manager
3. District Manager
4. Area Management

(Reference Appendix Item #4, Case Escalation Flow Chart)

Overdue Cases

Consumer and Industry Contact Office shall monitor the incidence of overdue cases daily and work with the responsible manager to minimize the occurrence. The goal is timely initial customer contact, timely and thorough resolution, final customer advisement of the resolution, and documentation of actions taken in the case.

Closing Cases

Referrals to Post Offices and District Administrative offices do not constitute final resolution. Closure occurs when the referral is returned with supporting documentation of final resolution to the customer (e.g., copy of written correspondence or detail of telephone contact). When the customer is unavailable within timeframe for closure, after two attempts and written notification, employees may close case. Document the detailed message left by telephone withthin the email message or within the letter to the customer. Final contact must be documented with the customer as soon as the resolution is discussed with the customer.

Appendix Item #1 – Core Language Letter

Title: Trying to Contact the Customer for Information

(Customer name)
(Address)
(City, State, ZIP + 4)

Dear **<INSERT NAME or “Customer”>**,

This letter is in response to your recent (complaint/issue, etc.) regarding (misdelivery, non-delivery of your mail, whatever their issue is…etc.)

In order to research this matter on your behalf, we need more information. We have attempted to contact you by telephone to discuss this matter with you; however, our attempts to reach you were unsuccessful.

We ask that you call us at XXX-XXX-XXXX between the hours of XX and XX. Please ask for (name of person who may assist the customer). Again, we need more specifics so that we may better serve you.

-OR-

We attempted to reach you by phone to discuss our plans to resolve this matter.

In an attempt to resolve your case we have (insert actions taken here). We believe this will (insert the outcome here) and hopefully prevent a future occurrence. Should you need our assistance in the future, please feel free to contact us at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Our representatives are there to assist you.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this matter with you.

-OR-

Please accept our sincere apology for any inconvenience this matter may have caused you.

-AND-

Thank you for choosing the United States Postal Service®.

<INSERT NAME OF EMPLOYEE, TITLE, AND OFFICE>

****
Your privacy is important to us. If you would like additional information on our privacy policy, please visit us online at: www.usps.com

cc: File

Appendix Item #2 – Enterprise Customer Care (eCC) System Overview

The Enterprise Customer Care (eCC) application is a case management system that is used to manage customer complaints. The application provides the ability for clear and consistent customer responses, actionable data for root cause analysis, and flexible reporting of customer issues to identify trends. It also provides Consumer & Industry Contact Offices (C&IC) and local Post Offices with email functionality for resolving customer complaints.

CASE PROCESSING
It is imperative that all employees project professionalism in all areas of complaint handling, including case input and processing. All information that is placed within the case is held in history. This information will be available to others and in some cases may be used in litigation. After the case has been saved, it cannot be deleted or changed. However, additional information may be entered using the notes function within the case.

Contacting the customer is vital to the complaint resolution process. In addition to ensuring that the customer receives a call back, when requested, it is imperative to follow these procedures when entering notes in the case:

- Name of employee who investigated or contacted the customer.
- Always note the name and title of the person you spoke with from a Post Office or other functional department in the case notes. Preferably, this should be a supervisor or manager.
- A complete description of the steps taken to resolve the problem must be noted in the case. Proposed actions, such as "Will talk to carrier," are not appropriate entries. For example, if it is a misdelivery case, document the route number, the date or dates it occurred, the specific steps taken to resolve, and who is to be contacted if the issue occurs again. Resolution notes should include the name or initials of the person closing the issue.
- Record only comments that pertain to the specific case. Always use complete sentences. Avoid any editorial comments or assumptions of what you think or feel. Do not diminish the credibility of anyone in writing or on the telephone.
- Proofread the notes before saving to make sure anyone reading them would know what you are writing about.
- If a call back is requested or additional information is required make at least two (2) attempts on day one (1). If the customer cannot be reached, send the customer Core Language Letter, "*Trying to Contact the Customer for Information." (reference appendix item 1)*
- Service issues pertaining to Political Campaign Mailings require the following additional information be obtained and recorded within the case:
  - The destination ZIP Code,
  - Scanned front and back copy of the mail piece
  - Name of the candidate.

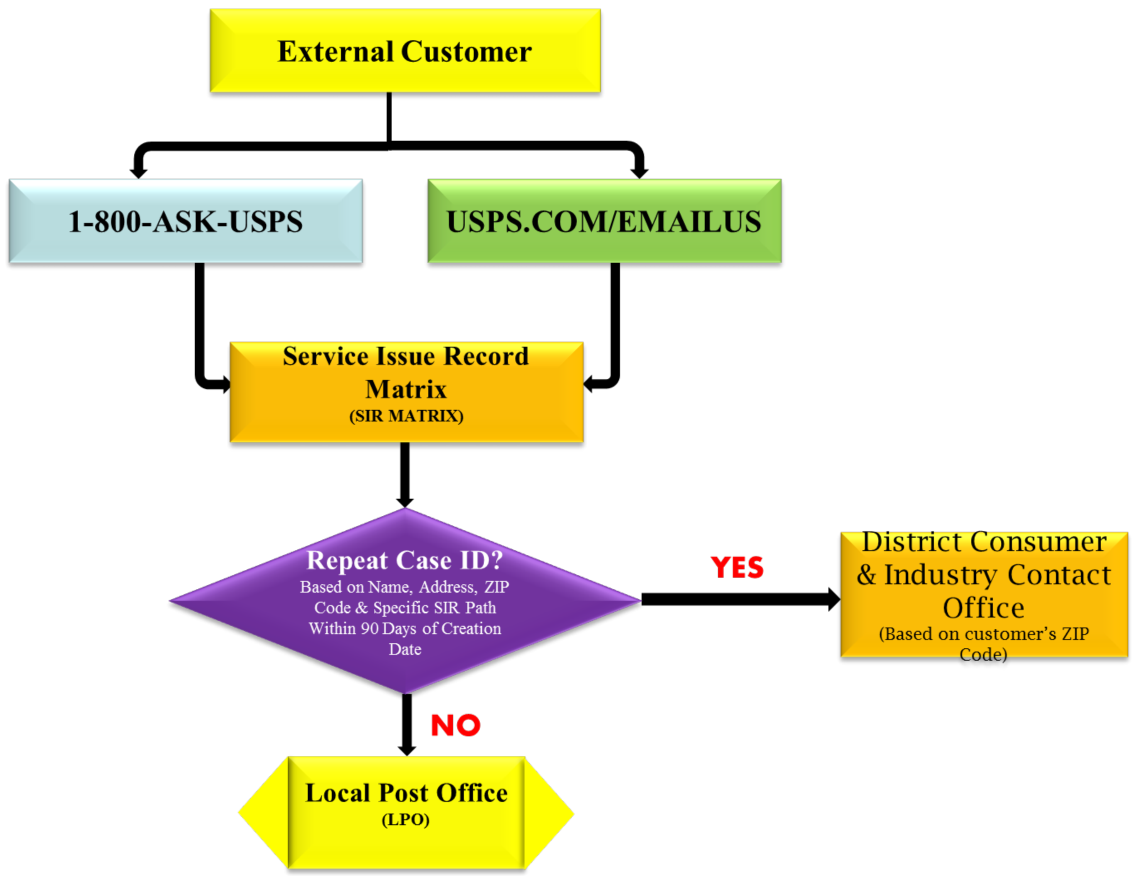
Please note: Due to the confidential nature of this information, Post Office personnel must NOT provide hard copies of complaints, or service requests (Hold Mail, Redelivery, and Carrier Pick-Up) directly to the customer. Field requests should be referred to the District Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) coordinator and Consumer & Industry Contact Manager. See guidelines under the Freedom of Information Act, Handbook AS 353 at http://about.usps.com/handbooks/as353/welcome.htm for further information.

CASE ASSIGNMENT PROCESS
In most instances, eCC will automatically direct customer complaints to the local Post Office that matches the customer's residential ZIP Code. At times, the mail problem(s) may have occurred in another delivery area, but the responsibility of responding to the issue belongs to the Post Office of the customer's delivery address.

There are two exceptions to this rule:

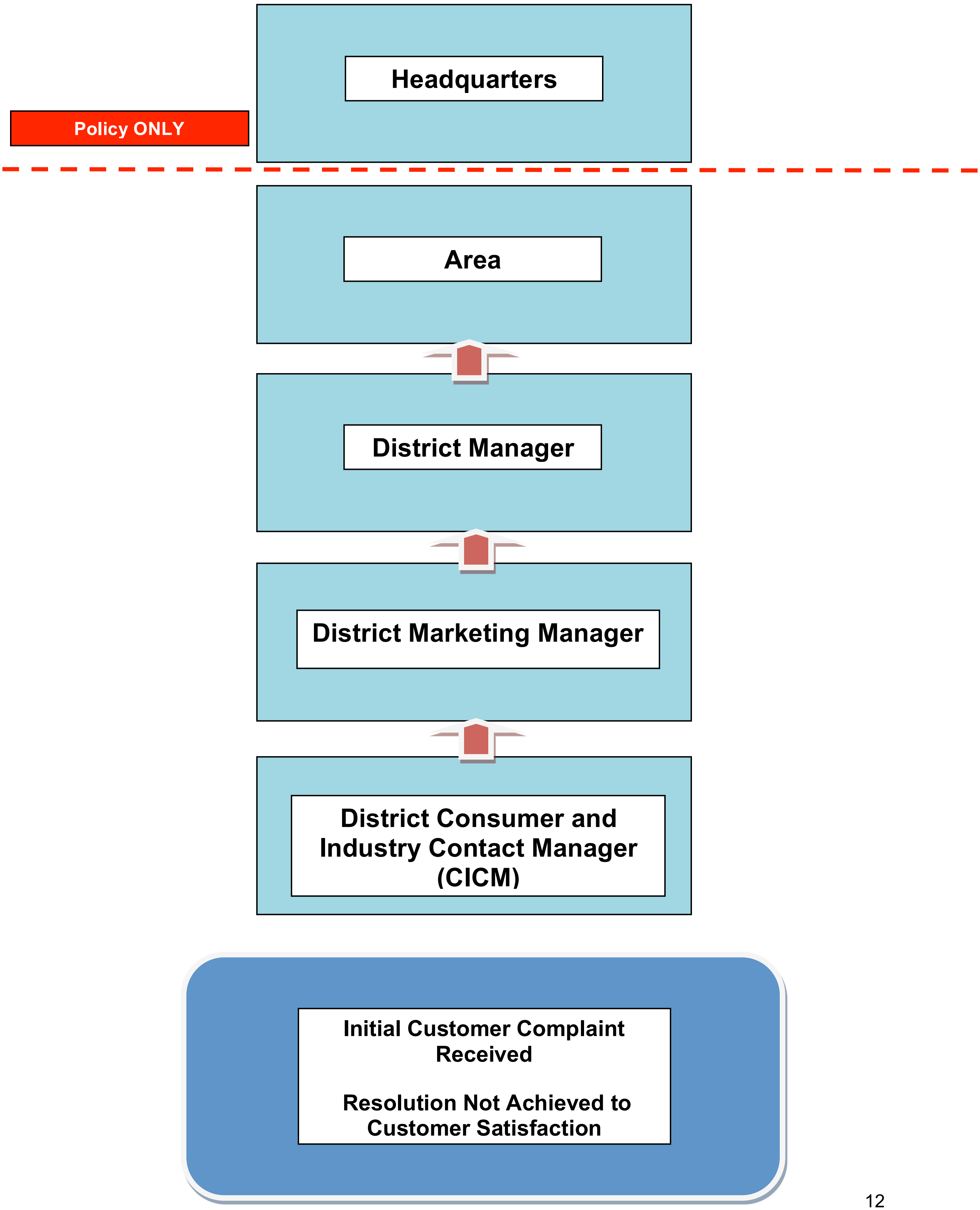
- Change-of-address complaints are sent to the ZIP Code of the former address if provided by the customer. If the former address is unknown, the case will go to the current address of the customer.
- Package complaints are sent to the ZIP Code of the delivery office.

Appendix Item #3 – Enterprise Customer Care (eCC) Routing Flow Chart



Note: SIR Matrix: stands for Service Issue Record Matrix. It is a predetermined routing mechanism that operates in the background of the eCC application. It ensures the cases are routed to the proper endpoint (ie. LPO or CAO) based on the categories chosen when case is initially created.

Appendix Item #4 – Case Escalation Flowchart



Appendix Item #5 - Customer Contact Methods

Follow the procedures in the following chart to ensure that necessary actions are performed within the indicated time frames.

Customer Contact	Initial Acknowledgement	Final Resolution
Person to Person	Immediate	3 Days
Telephone (Local)	Immediate	3 Days
Letter (Local)	Immediate	3 Days
800-ASK-USPS	1 Business Day*	Per eCC Due Date
www.usps.com	1 Business Day*	Per eCC Due Date

***1 Business Day equals 24 hours**

Appendix Item #6 - Notice 4314-C, We Want To Know

Notice 4314-C, *We Want To Know,* promotes three methods for contacting the Postal Service and providing feedback. The notice is mandatory stock at all Post Office lobby information racks as "take one" and used by Postal Service employees in assisting with complaint/concerns.

Appendix Item #7 – Response Times

Table 2-2. Due Date Calculation Based on Source Code Table

Source Code Name	Service Level Agreement (SLA) (Business Days to Complete)
1-800-ASK-USPS	3
Claims	3
Letter	3
Letter - PMG	10
Letter - PMG Compliment	10
Letter - Senate/Congressional	7
NEW - Letter - Consumer Advocate	10
NEW - Letter - PRC	10
OIG	10
Political Mail Complaints	2
Publication Watch - Daily	36
Publication Watch - Monthly	36
Publication Watch - Weekly	36
Telephone	3
USPS.com/Email	3
Stamps	2
Walk-in	3

Note: The weekend/holiday schedule will still be taken into account when calculating case due dates.

Note: The same due date data calculation logic will be applied to reroutes as it is today.

Note: SLAs will be mapped to the eCC Source Codes. Every source code will have a defined SLA.

(Source: eCustomer Care User's Guide)

Appendix Item #8 – Customer Complaint Control Log

Customer Complaint Log			Office Name:					ZIP Code:	
Customer or Company Information									
Name	Address or eMail	Phone No.	eCC Case No. or Tracking No.	Subject	Type of Initial Contact C=Postcard T=Telephone L=Letter P=Personal	Date Received	Suspense Date	Assigned To	Date Closed

Appendix Item #9 – Tools & Resources

EACCESS RESOURCES

CCC-RPM: This ASR tool through EDW allows users to view numerous reports regarding customer complaints and inquiries documented in eCC

CESA PUSH REPORTS (Customer Engagement And Strategic Alignment Push Reports): The CESA group has developed several key reports which focus on improving the customer experience. These reports are distributed through a special email account and are based on analysis of data in eCC.

COARS (Change of Address Reporting System): This system consists of a central database for retrieval of COA form images, associated results and a Web based server application that provides intranet access to the COA image (if available) and results.

eCC (Enterprise Customer Care): Enterprise-wide application that is used to manage customer's complaints end-to-end. This is an external and internal facing application that implements a 360-degree communication loop between our external customers, Customer Care Centers, Local Post Offices and Consumer & Industry Affairs offices. This application enables users to initiate, route, communicate and document resolution of customer complaints.

FDB (Facilities Database): Data is electronically collected from USPS systems across the nation and is consolidated into the Facilities Database System (FDB). The system serves as a centralized, complete, and accurate source of Postal facility information

***MYPO* (**My Post Office**):** Enterprise-wide USPS Portal that gathers delivery task information by local post office facility and provides the local post office supervisor with a one-page view of many significant mail processing and delivery tasks (i.e., hold mail requests, redelivery information, hold for pickup, rural non deliveries, carrier pickups, customer service issues, etc). Information is sorted by route and is used by carriers to perform mail delivery tasks on a daily basis.

***Product Tracking System* (Intranet):** This site houses general information, search tools, label entry applications, and reports related to package and extra services tracking. This site also links to other systems for specific information concerning Priority Mail Express and USPS Corporate Accounts.

Web APPS PRLM Analysis Tool: This application allows users to view images of packages in support of analyzing instances of misdirected or missing items.

LOCAL RESOURCES

Postmaster
MPOO (Manager Post Office Operations)
District Consumer & Industry Contact Manager

LINKS

Consumer & Industry Affairs Website: http://blue.usps.gov/blue/caweb/welcome.htm
Website provides information on departments within Consumer & Industry Affairs. Includes links to the Consumer Advocate Newsletter, eCC, Core Language letters and information related to customer service.

Domestic & International Claims: http://blue.usps.gov/accounting/domestic.htm
Source for information on filing Domestic and International Claims and timelines

eCC User's Guide:
http://blue.usps.gov/caweb/fsi/documents/eCC%20User%20Guide%20R2_V1_OCT%202010.pdf
The eCustomer Care (eCC) application is an enterprise solution for web self-service and case management, and supports the end-to-end process of initiating, routing, resolving, communicating, and managing customer service requests.

Election Mail: http://blue.usps.gov/marketing/election.htm
This website is a single, comprehensive source for information about the Postal Service's role in elections. Its purpose is to educate employees on the importance and proper handling of both Official Election mail and Political Campaign mail.

FAST (Facility Access and Shipment Tracking): http://fast.usps.gov/fast
FAST is an electronic appointment scheduling system that replaced Drop Shipment Appointment System (DSAS).

Global Business: http://blue.usps.gov/globalbusiness/
Site provides information on International Service Centers, Global Service Updates

Mail Recovery Center Information:
http://blue.usps.gov/purchase/assetmgnt/am_mrc_welcome.htm The Mail Recovery Program is responsible for the policies and procedures that govern the processing and final disposition of undeliverable mail. The Mail Recovery Center is located in Atlanta, GA.

Postal Bulletin: http://www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/bulletin/pb.htm
The Postal Bulletin is the official source of updates to Postal Service policies and procedures. This biweekly publication is available online and hardcopy. It includes advance notices of updates, time-sensitive instructions, and other business information. The Postal Bulletin also includes the text of revisions to the standards in the Domestic Mail Manual and the International Mail Manual.

Postal Explorer: http://pe.usps.com/
Postal Explorer is a virtual library of postal information and tools designed for US Postal Service customers, business mailers, and employees. It puts a wealth of postal information for mailing and shipping Domestically, Internationally, and to APO/FPO/DPO destinations, at your fingertips in an easy-to-use format.

Postal Inspection Service: https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/
The mission of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service is to support and protect the U.S. Postal Service and its employees, infrastructure, and customers; enforce the laws that defend the nation's mail system from illegal or dangerous use; and ensure public trust in the mail.

RIBBS (Rapid Information Bulletin Board)**:** https://ribbs.usps.gov/
This site provides notice of proposed and final changes to mail preparation standards, mail service updates, public meetings, and other official announcements.

LMS CUSTOMER SERVICE COURSES

Course Number: 3620590 - Customer Service Processes and Procedures

Description: Failing to realize the importance of customer service and effective complaints handling leads to increasingly dissatisfied customers. Organizations need to be able to address the needs of customers in an effective and efficient manner. This course is intended to show the proper procedures and processes needed to provide effective customer service: how to properly support a customer, how to provide accurate documentation, and how to handle difficult customers. This course helps to prepare learners interested in the Customer Service Representative (CSR) Certification, which is targeted to individuals wishing to qualify to work in a customer support center/help desk environment. (Length: 3.0 hours)

Course Number: 3622168 - Customer Service Confrontation and Conflict

Description: How do you handle angry and confrontational customers? One of the most challenging, and potentially uncomfortable responsibilities of a customer service person is dealing with angry customers. By following a few simple techniques such as letting the customer vent, and expressing empathy towards the customer's situation, you can usually defuse tense situations without incident. This course explores typical trouble spots in dealing with angry customers, including reasons for customer dissatisfaction and things customer service people should refrain from saying or doing to avoid adding to the customer's frustration. (Length: 1.0 hour)

Course Number: 3622164 - Customer Service Fundamentals: Building Rapport

Description: Good customer service and strong customer relationships begin with building rapport. Building rapport requires knowing your customer, understanding their situation, and providing an empathetic ear for them to voice their concerns. Building rapport can lead to great customer relationships between individuals as well as the company they represent. This course covers how to build rapport with customers by being customer-focused. This includes being able to connect with your customers, being positive, paying close attention to the customers' needs, and understanding their feelings by empathizing with them. (Length: 1.0 hour)

Course Number: 3622165 - Customer Service in the Field

Description: How do you make a good impression when providing customer service in the field? When you meet customers on their turf, your initial meeting forms the basis for their overall impression of you, your abilities, and your company. You can enhance the impressions you make in the field by using a few tried-and-true techniques, including being prepared, practicing customer recognition, and employing active listening so the customer feels reassured by your presence. To kick off your face-to-face service meeting, you should try to start on a positive note, clearly set the expectations for resolution time and scope, and help customers fully understand your products and services, as well as your intentions. This skill-building course takes your customer service proficiency up a notch toward excellent customer assistance. (Length: 1.0 hour)

Course Number: 3622166 - Customer Service over the Phone

Description: Can you hear a smile over the phone? When you're providing customer service over the phone – without the benefits of face-to-face interaction with your customer – it can be challenging to establish the right relationship for excellent service. Just like for face-to-face customer service, there are many techniques for service over the phone that can help you to consistently deliver the best customer service. This course covers the basic rules for answering a customer call including greeting the customer and offering your assistance. It includes information on how to make a good impression by listening and using questions to probe for more information, using your tone, and being able to empathize and be sincere with the customer. This course also describes ways of reflecting or adapting to your customer's style. In the end, customer service should focus on how to better serve and benefit the customer. (Length: 1.0 hour)

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN PREPARING CUSTOMER RESPONSES

Writing style shapes people's impressions of our company.

Do	Do Not
Be concise and to the point	Open your email with "Hi"
Introduce only one idea per paragraph	Write in CAPITALS
Choose your words	Leave out the message thread
Answer all questions & anticipate further questions	Use emoticons
Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation	Use uncommon abbreviations
Make it personal	Use uncommon acronyms
Avoid redundancies	Write long sentences
Use proper structure & layout	Use Jargon
Use a meaningful subject	Start sentences with small letters
Include your name at the end	Use Text Message Language

Know when to use e-mail (and when not to): You shouldn't send an e-mail to do a conversation's work. Complicated subjects are often difficult to explain face to face, much less in an e-mail. Instead of firing off a complicated explanation via e-mail, set up a short call to address the issue live. E-mail is also a poor stand-in for conversation when conducting critical, difficult, and/or unpleasant discussions.

Check your work: Before clicking the Send button, give it a final once-over. Reread the entire e-mail, checking it for grammatical errors, punctuation mistakes, and typos. You'll be amazed at what you catch. Also make sure your tone is appropriate for the message. It will help to comprise your email in a word document and copy/paste to the eCC email template to ensure accurate spelling, and consistent font and line spacing.

Write effective subject lines. Writing subject lines can be tricky, but you should always include one. The goal is to summarize the message without being too wordy or too vague. Long subjects tend to be skimmed or ignored, and they don't always fully display in e-mail viewers. Be sure to use a subject line that is meaningful to both the recipient and you, the sender.

Properly use CC and BCC. The carbon copy (CC) and blind carbon copy (BCC) features found in most e-mail clients allow you to send copies of an e-mail to others you need to keep informed but who aren't necessarily the primary recipients. When copying others, be certain the e-mail message pertains to them. If you use e-mail address lists, verify that all of the members of the list should receive the e-mail, too, and remove those who don't need to be included. Use the BCC feature sparingly.

Be concise. Use short paragraphs. Introduce only one idea per paragraph and lay it out clearly in the first sentence of the paragraph. Then use the rest of the paragraph to support or elaborate. Challenge yourself to keep the email communication as concise as possible. Your contact is just as likely to be checking the message on a phone as on a desktop computer, and shorter is easier to digest – which means you're more likely to get a response.

Be Positive. Find the most positive way to respond to a customer, even if the situation presents itself as negative.

Communicate "action steps" first, not last. It's standard practice to begin an email by summarizing what happened previously, then following on with any "action steps" that emerged. But this makes it easy for the most important information to get lost in the shuffle. By reversing this order – and listing actions steps first and foremost – you keep the attention on the items you want to draw attention to.

Make the way forward clear. Be proactive and take the lead in your communications so that the way forward is completely clear. For a multi-step process, create a bullet-pointed outline of the parameters from the beginning.

Include deadlines. Some people think that handing out deadlines can seem dictatorial, although successful busy people recommend deadlines. It helps the receiver integrate the tasks into their schedule. If a response from them is imperative, politely include a deadline: “For the project to stay on track, I need a response from you by 1/18.” If a response is optional, communicate that as well: “If I don’t hear back from you by 1/18, I’ll proceed with the solution I’ve proposed.”

Use “FYI” for emails that have no actionable information. Some emails need to be shared to keep everyone in the loop. But non-actionable correspondence should be labeled as such – so that it can be prioritized accordingly.

Tell them that you’ll get to it later. If someone sends you an urgent email that you can’t act on immediately, write them a quick note to acknowledge receipt and include when you will get to it. You’ll quell their anxiety, and save yourself a future nagging email from them. Explaining now why you won’t get to something until later is much more effective than apologizing later.

Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation. This is not only important because improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression of the company, it is also important for conveying the message properly. Limit use of jargon and acronyms or abbreviations. Do not use emoticons. Do not use all capital letters; this can be interpreted as shouting.

Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions. If you do not answer all the questions in the original email, you will receive further e-mails regarding the unanswered questions. If you are able to pre-empt relevant questions, the customer will be grateful and impressed.

Written Correspondence Format

Date

Customer Name
Street or POB address
City, State ZIP+4

Dear (Customer Name),

Beginning paragraph: This is in response to your letter of (date of letter) to the Postmaster General who shared your concerns with our office for investigation and response.

Apologize (I apologize to you on behalf of the Postal Service for the experience you describe and thank you for the opportunity to make improvements in our delivery service)

Body: Brief, complete, and accurate details of investigation and what actions will be taken to improve or resolve.

Apologize again and thank the customer for writing (Again, (customer name), we regret your experience and will work to restore your confidence in the Postal Service.

Sincerely,

Your name
Title
Contact information

Use official letterhead

Use Arial 10 font only.

Use left-justified margin only.

Right margin. Try to keep the right-hand margin fairly even. Don't leave one word hanging out on the right if you can add a return or hyphenate the word and make it look neat.

Date: if response will be signed by someone other than yourself, add date when signed.

First paragraph should always begin as follows:

This is in response to your letter of June 16 to the Postmaster General who shared your concerns with our office for investigation and response.

Respond accurately and completely to all questions raised by the correspondent.

Be warm, brief, and straightforward.

Do not use terms and abbreviations not readily understandable. Do not use acronyms unless spelled out at the first use.

Use Dear and Sincerely as complimentary salutation and closing.

eMail Response Format

To:
Cc:
Bcc:

Subject: [To what this email refers]

Dear [Salutation]:

The main characteristic of full block business letters is that everything is flush with the left margin. This format is easy to read and looks form-like.

Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

Sincerely,
[Your name, title]

Contact Information

Office of the Consumer Advocate & Customer Relations
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 4541
Washington DC 20260-5601
http://blue.usps.gov/blue/caweb/cam/directories.htm